


Why shouldn't owners interfere?

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Why shouldn't media proprietors such as [Rupert Murdoch](#) interfere in the editorial policy of their own newspapers or TV channels? This was the fascinating challenge from former *Sunday Times* editor [Andrew Neil](#) at today's House of Lords Communications Committee hearings. You can watch clips [here](#) where Neil asserts that the person who bought the company, invested their money, pays the wages, and takes the risk over profits and libels, *should* have a right to influence what is actually produced.

"They have more right to a say than anybody else in the land, except the editor" he told the Lords.

Neil also gave an interesting commentary on the way Rupert insisted on exercising this right when he was in Murdoch's employ. He says that the Murdoch tabloids would get told what to write but that the qualities were not 'instructed'. However, "I was never left in any doubt what he wanted" says Neil:

"He let you know his views on every major issue of the time. You knew as an editor that your leasehold as editor depended upon accomodating his views on most cases."

Neil has a point. Murdoch is utterly transparent about his views and his influence. His publications are equally clear about their bias and their ownership. As long as there is overall diversity in a media market does it matter? Discuss...

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